

Studying the Masters for Inspiration and Ideas

BEND I





Session 1

Discovering Meaningful Small Moments, as the Masters Might

Generating Ideas for Writing

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach children that one way they can learn to write meaningful, beautiful stories is to study the craft of mentor authors.

GETTING READY

- ✓ Plan to start your minilesson before children gather in the meeting area.
- ✓ Writing center, set up to include five page booklets, single sheets of paper, revision strips and flaps, and writing caddies with pens, staplers, Post-it® notes, and date stamps
- ✓ A preassigned table monitor
- ✓ *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen and *The Leaving Morning* by Angela Johnson or other mentor texts that show writerly craft (see Teaching)
- ✓ Your own Tiny Topics spiral notepad, 2" × 1", with Small Moment ideas already written, or in mind to share with the class (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- ✓ Writing folders, one for each student, with a red dot on one side, for finished pieces and a green dot on the other side, for in-process pieces (see Share)
- ✓ Mentor texts and anchor charts from previous year (see Share)
- ✓ Piece of student writing from the day (see Share)

THIS SESSION REPRESENTS the official launch of your second-grade writing workshop. You will want to create ribbon-cutting excitement, so that children feel as if they are embarking on a whole new chapter in their writing lives—because they are! The difference between the little kids who graduated first grade and the big ones who now return as second-graders is enormous. It can sometimes feel as if in two short months they have done a whole year's worth of growing up. Entering second-graders express themselves with greater precision and confidence, they have a new awareness of the world outside themselves, and the stories they tell feel richer—you will want to capitalize on this in your writing workshop.

Remind your students of all they learned to do last year in Small Moment writing, and tell them that because of this learning, they are ready for more sophisticated writing work—they are ready to learn from the masters. “Master writers,” you’ll say, “don’t just tell any ol’ stories; they tell meaningful ones. Master writers create powerful books that people across the world read again and again and again.” Then read just the opening lines of each of the two mentor texts the class will study in this unit—we recommend *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen and *The Leaving Morning* by Angela Johnson, two beautifully crafted picture books—and marvel at how the openings alone carry such weight.

Then turn the reins over to your students. Suggest that the class conduct an inquiry. Say, “I wonder how these two authors came up with their ideas—what do you think?” and see what ideas children generate. Hopefully they’ll recognize that both Jane and Angela chose to write about memorable moments—ones that stood out from everyday life. Help students realize that these authors have experienced moments that made them think, “There’s a powerful story here”—and that children have had those moments, too. That is, you’ll aim to convey not only that Jane and Angela are masterful writers, but that children can learn to write in similar ways. You will want your children to adore these two writers and also to identify with them.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.2.3, W.2.8, W.2.10; RL.2.1, RL.2.5, RL.2.10, RL.3.1; SL.2.1, SL.2.4; L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.3, L.3.3.c

“Second-graders express themselves with greater precision and confidence, they have a new awareness of the world outside themselves, and the stories they tell feel richer.”

You'll want your students to take something else from this first day. You'll want them to understand that Jane and Angela didn't just come up with a story and “poof!” write it down. They had a process. Suggest that perhaps they carried little story idea notebooks (or Tiny Topics notepads, as you'll call them), in which they jotted ideas as they occurred to them. Tomorrow you'll give students each their very own Tiny Topics notepad. For now, you'll set them up to think in partnerships about moments from their own lives that matter enormously to them. Then you'll send them off to write, write, write!





MINILESSON

Discovering Meaningful Small Moments, as the Masters Might

Generating Ideas for Writing

CONNECTION

Remind children of the materials and routines of writing workshop and give them a chance to practice gathering.

Children were seated at their tables—not in the meeting area—as I began today’s writing workshop. “Second-graders, it’s time for writing workshop. Just like in first grade, every day we will have time set aside to work on writing projects. At the end of each unit, we will then publish our final products. Do you remember how you all had writing celebrations last year? Remember when you read your work to an audience and received all that wonderful feedback? I remember. I attended a few at the end of the year! You all wrote so much and took such pride and care in making those published pieces. This year, we are going to do the same thing!”

I walked over to where I had set up our writing center, to the various baskets of paper, caddies with tools, and baskets of books—that students had read and used last year as mentor texts. “This is our writing center. You will see that there are booklets and single sheets, strips and flaps, books you studied last year, and writing caddies.” I held up an example of each of these. “These caddies are filled with pens, staplers, Post-it notes, date stamps, and one folder for each of you—with your name at the top!”

“Today we are going to start our first unit of study! I have selected six of you to be table monitors today.” I gestured to list a names.

“Your job is to collect the caddies, place them on the table, and distribute the folders to each table where your new classmates sit. Over the next week, we will switch this job around, so that you all can practice it. Later, we will decide on class jobs for the next couple of months. For now, let’s practice getting ready. Let’s try it! Table monitors—set up the writing materials. Second-graders, gather in the meeting area, quickly and”—I gave a dramatic pause and almost whispered—“quietly.”

◆ COACHING

Notice that children aren't yet in the meeting area when this teaching begins. That would have been easy to miss until midway into this minilesson, a reminder that you need to read a minilesson entirely through before teaching it.

It is really important to help children transfer all they learned from a preceding year into this new writing workshop. We hope, therefore, that your teaching reminds children of what they've already learned to do and makes them feel as if they enter this new year already poised to accomplish great things. We recognize, however, that you'll alter this introduction if most of your children didn't have opportunities to write when they were in first grade.

Create a drumroll around this unit and remind students of all they learned about writing stories last year.

Once children were seated with their eyes on me, I said, “Do you know that I’ve been counting down the days of summer thinking about this moment? And now here it is—the start of your lives as second-grade writers! We are going to do some really special work to launch this year.”

Leaning in I said, “We are going to learn from *master* writers. That means writers who stand out even among other published writers. Writers whose books are so powerful, so moving, and so beautifully crafted that people from all over the world read them again and again and again.

“Your teachers from last year told me that you *already* know how to write Small Moment stories about things that have happened to you. And they said that you also already know how to tell the exact actions the people in your stories make—and what they are thinking and feeling.” I looked incredulous and said, “Is that true?” The kids nodded.

“Your teachers also told me that you learned how to do some cool things that professional writers do to fancy up their writing, like write three dots to build excitement, and write exciting parts with big bold words so that readers use a big, bold voice to read them.” I then said to them, “No way did first-graders do that!” The kids were already on their knees, protesting that in fact they *had* tried out these craft moves last year.

“Is that right? In that case, I’m *certain* you’re ready to learn from the masters. Are you game to try?” They nodded vigorously.

✿ Name the teaching point.

“Today I want to teach you that master authors don’t just tell any ol’ stories. They tell *meaningful* stories. Paying attention to the kinds of stories they choose to tell can inspire you when you are trying to come up with your own meaningful stories.”

TEACHING

Introduce children to the master writers they will be studying, and read the beginning of a book by each one, pointing out how meaningful each story topic is.

“Look at this, writers,” I said, holding up Jane Yolen’s book, *Owl Moon*, as if it were gold. “This book was written by a master writer named Jane Yolen. It’s called *Owl Moon* and it’s about a time when Jane’s daughter, Heidi, went looking for owls late one night with her father.” I leafed through the pages and said, “Jane felt that this one small moment was so special—this one owling trip that her husband and daughter shared in the woods—that she stretched it out across all these pages.” I leafed through the book to show kids. “We’re going to read this book together later. I’ll just read the beginning of it now. As I do, listen to how Jane shows us how special this moment was.”

You’ll alter this so that it matches whatever you believe your children did learn during the preceding year. It may not yet be the case in your school that teachers across a grade teach in ways that are shared, allowing you to count on your children bringing a background to second grade. But hopefully your school is working toward that goal. The Common Core State Standards convey a very strong message to all of us: we can’t bring students to high levels of achievements if we can never count on any prior instruction. And yes, it does take a village to raise a child!

It was late one winter night, long past my bedtime, when Pa and I went owling. There was no wind. The trees stood still as giant statues. And the moon was so bright the sky seemed to shine. Somewhere behind us a train whistle blew, long and low, like a sad, sad song.

"Isn't that beautiful, writers? See how quiet and bright that night was, and how precisely Jane describes it? From just those opening lines we can already tell how special that particular experience was.

"I want to show you another book. Listen to the first line from this book, called *The Leaving Morning*. Angela Johnson wrote this one. It's a story about when her family moved. Listen to how it begins."

The LEAVING happened on a soupy, misty morning, when you could hear the street sweeper. Sssshhhshsh.

"The *Leaving*. Isn't that an unusual way to describe a moving day? Like Jane, Angela uses images and sounds to bring her first page to life—and you can tell that this day left its mark on her.

"Writers, do you see how carefully these two master writers worded their opening lines? Even without hearing the rest of their books, it's so clear that these small moments have BIG meaning for these authors, isn't it?"

Brainstorm with your children possible ways that Jane Yolen and Angela Johnson—and any author—might come up with a meaningful Small Moment story.

"I wonder how these two authors came up with their ideas. Jane, for example. How did she imagine a story about her husband taking their daughter owling one night? And Angela—what do you think made her write about the 'Leaving'? Hmm, . . . Turn and tell the person sitting next to you what you think."

After a couple of minutes, I reconvened the group. "Writers, I could tell you were thinking really hard just now, trying to figure out how these writers came up with their ideas. Some of you noticed that both authors recorded things that happened to them, or that happened to people they know. That's definitely one way authors get ideas. Some of you noticed, too, that these aren't just everyday moments. Angela didn't write about any ol' morning, and Jane didn't write about any ol' night. Angela and Jane picked moments that stood out from everyday ones. Maybe in the middle of their regular lives, they grabbed hold of moments that stayed with them, moments that got them thinking, 'Hey, I could write a story about that.' For years, people have tried to figure out what makes a good story. Jane Yolen once said, 'I like books that touch my head and my heart at the same time' (janeyolen.com)." As I said this, I touched my head and heart. "That's powerful, right? Books that make you think *and* feel?"

Tell children you think Jane Yolen and Angela Johnson probably use a notepad to record the little details that later become stories.

"Small moment ideas occur to writers all the time—so writers know that they need to be prepared to get an idea down on paper, even if there isn't time to write the whole story right then and there. Maybe Jane overheard her husband and daughter slip out of bed to go owling in the middle of the night, and she was too sleepy to write that story, so she just wrote the idea in a Tiny Topics notepad like this." I held up a tiny spiral notepad. "Maybe she wrote 'David and

Notice that you can cup your hands around tiny segments of a text, reading a line or two aloud, to make your point. It's rare for you to do large swatches of read-aloud within a minilesson.

This is a long minilesson already, so resist the temptation to go on and on. Brevity is important.

Your children will not all have the chance to talk, and they surely won't finish talking before the turn-and-talk time is over. Your goal is to ignite a certain kind of involvement, and just two minutes of talk accomplishes that goal.

It takes imagination for the author study to inform children's work because all we have to go on is the author's final text, not the author's process. This is okay because you can imagine the author doing whatever you want your kids to do! I emphasize the lifework of writing not because of our study of Angela Johnson and Jane Yolen, in particular, but because by second grade, children are ready to have meaningful, wide-awake writing lives. We use the author study, then, as a forum for teaching that writers live differently.

Helen—up in the night.’ And I’m sure Angela didn’t have time to write about her family’s move in the middle of packing everything up! So she probably grabbed her Tiny Topics notepad and just quickly jotted, ‘The Leaving.’”

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Share your tiny notepad ideas with children. Then ask them to think of a Small Moment story idea and to tell that topic to the person sitting next to them. Suggest that they try to name why this moment is meaningful.

“Writers, last night I tried to do what Jane and Angela and so many writers do. I sat in my favorite chair and thought about little moments that stood out for me—ones I might want to write about. Bit by bit, ideas crept in. Like one time when I was your age and I got a big role in the class play—I was so scared, I didn’t think I had it in me to get on that stage—but then I did it! And I felt proud. I thought to myself, ‘Yes, there is a story there that I might tell,’ and I grabbed hold of it.

“Right now, think of a small moment that’s happened in your life—one that stands out from all everyday moments—and tell that idea to your partner. See if you can also say why that moment is meaningful. When it’s your turn to listen, be the kind of listener who cares. Ask for more information if you don’t yet understand why this moment was so special.”

I gave children a minute to talk, and listened in to their conversations. Isabelle said to Jordan, “I can write about how, when I went skating, the ice was slippery. I almost fell. My sister held my hand.” She gestured to show how her outstretched arms helped her maintain her balance while skating.

Isabelle acted like she was done and Jordan said, “So why was that moment special?” I gave him a thumbs up.

“Um, ‘cause I was proud that I didn’t fall. And my sister helped me,” Isabelle said.

“I’m going to write about when I was with my dad in the park and I was trying to knock icicles down from the trees,” Jordan said.

“Did you get any icicles?” Isabelle asked, but before Jordan could answer, it was time to reconvene the class.

Whispering, Jordan said, “Yeah, ‘cause my dad put me on his shoulders! Then I could reach.”

Ask writers to get started by telling the beginning of one story to their partner.

“Writers, I’m hearing such wonderful ideas about small moments that have happened in your own lives—ones that stand out to you from your everyday lives. I don’t want you to lose any momentum, so right now, turn again to the person sitting next to you, and try out a story beginning. See if you can start your story in a way that shows the reader just how special this moment was to you. Turn and start to story-tell!”

Notice, here, that as you ask your students to try out the strategy and begin to generate topics for writing, you can also teach them about being good listening partners. You might, for example, ask your students to listen to and extend each other’s thoughts just by asking the question “Why?” This allows each writer to reflect on his or her topic a bit more, focusing on meaning. Teaching students to respond to one another in this way gives them a concrete model of how to work together so as to extend and focus their ideas. In the long term, this will be a supportive structure in improving both your writers and their writing.

Remind children that they can be influenced by master writers and invite them to begin writing, naming aloud the ways they do so efficiently.

After just a moment, I interrupted so children would still have energy to tell their stories—hopefully in writing. “Authors can be so inspirational! They influence our own ideas, they fill us with beautiful language, they remind us of why we love to read and write! For the next few weeks, you are going to mentor yourselves to authors and learn from books, like they are your teachers!

“This year, because you are older and wiser, not only will you get straight to your writing, but you will also craft powerful literature, just like the authors whose books line our shelves. “Writers, who is ready to begin? If you have an idea you can stand up, walk to the writing center, get your paper, and then head to your table—quickly and quietly—to get down to work.” No one moved. Quietly, without talking, I leaned down toward the students gathered closest to me, nodded, and motioned to the writing center, “Why don’t you all go ahead and we will watch you get started.

“There goes April. She is walking to the center and picking a five-page booklet! Now she is headed to her table. There is Mohammed. He is already at his table and what is he doing? Looks like he is taking out a pen and starting to write his name. Yes, that is what he is doing. Will he take the date stamp next? Yes! He remembers! And look over here.” I walked over to another table, “Rocio has already started writing. She remembers too! Who else remembers? If you have an idea, place your thumb on your knee, and I will just wave my hand over your head and you can get up and get started—quickly and quietly.”

You will want to decide how the author you have selected can help children with the very beginning of their writing process. You won't want to say, “Jane Yolen wrote about owling with her dad and you can write about something you did with your dad too,” because you are hoping children learn strategies (not topics) from authors they admire. You could help children emulate Jane's process of mining her life for topics. I decided to focus not on helping children know what they could write about, but on reminding them to zoom in on tiny, specific topics.



Cultivating Independent Writers

THE FIRST DAYS OF WORKSHOP will tell your students everything—these early days set the tone and expectation for the whole year. You will want to make sure you are providing a rigorous workshop as well as one that is full of inspiration and motivation. Working with your students in one-to-one conferences and small groups will be crucial. When does one start these conversations? Right at the very beginning.

Initially, you can anticipate that students will need reminders about ways to solve problems on their own. You'll need to remind them ways to figure out hard words, how to start a new piece when they are done, how to use sketches to realize what else they need to write, or how to keep their conversations in support of their writing.

During the first week of workshop, many teachers make their conferences very quick, or work with whole tables at one time. This allows you to not only keep the workshop moving along, but gives you the chance to meet and talk with all the students a few times in the week. You can also use the on-demand assessment that you did prior to beginning the unit to prioritize conferences and to set up small groups.

In a one-to-one conference in the first week of workshop, you will want to notice what the student is doing as a writer. You will want to carefully read the student's writing and ask a few quick questions. While you will already have a sense of the writer from the on-demand assessment, you can learn more from these short conversations. You might inquire about how the student got her idea for a story, what her plans are next when she finishes the page or the piece, or how she chose the details that are on the page. When you ask children about their process as they work, you will see who is aware of the strategies they are using and who needs those strategies named and described for them, so that they can draw on and talk about them in the future. Naming what a student has done and reminding that child to use that strategy again in other places or pieces is a powerful thing to do in a conference. Doing this gives a writer a chance to reuse this skill, often in deeper more nuanced ways.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Finding Meaning in Everyday Moments

As students were spread throughout the classroom, working away, I called for their attention. "Writers, some of you have told me that you can't think of any special moments in your lives. All you can think of are things you do every day, like eat and play. That got me thinking: meaningful moments are sometimes ordinary! Remember *Night of the Veggie Monster*? The book you read last year about the little boy who dreaded eating vegetables? George McClements (2008) was inspired by his picky-eater son to write that story. And what a great story! But it was about something meaningful that happened during an everyday dinner. Remember? His son realized, after all that fuss, that the pea wasn't so bad after all! Each one of you has lots of moments like that. You might want to thumb through books on your shelves to see if they spark ideas. Of course, you won't take those writers' exact story ideas—just like you won't take Jane's story about owling, or Angela's about 'The Leaving.' But you might find that these stories remind you of moments in your *own* lives worth writing about."

Often, in addition to conferring with individuals and small groups, you will "voice over" during the workshop time, doing this spurs kids on to continue writing with stamina. You might say things like, "Wow, this room really *sounds* like a room of writers! Keep your pens moving!" Or you might say, "I see someone starting a new piece, because she has finished her first story. We can all remember to do that." These voice-overs—comments that narrate and name the positive things happening in the workshop—not only give little minor teaching tips, but also give the room energy!

In these ways, you will be beginning to build a highly motivating environment, one that welcomes your second-graders to this new, rigorous year.



SHARE

Organizing Ongoing and Finished Writing Projects

Introduce writing folders to the class, explaining that one pocket is for writing that is finished and one is for writing that is ready for more work.

"Writers," I called out from the middle of the classroom, holding up multicolored folders. "I have something for our writing! A treasure chest of sorts! Just like last year, this year you will keep all of your precious writing in a folder with two pockets. Does anyone remember how to use these two sides?"

"I remember," April called out. "Stop and go!"

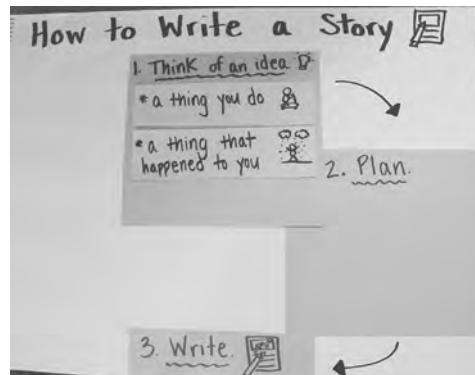
"That's right. This side," I pointed to the green-dot side, "is your 'Go!' side. It is the side that means you are still working on that piece of writing. This side," I pointed to the red-dot side, "is the 'Stop!' side. It is the side that means you are finished working on that piece of writing.

"I am going to give each of you your own folder. Will you do two things? First, decide whether your writing goes on the green-dot side or the red-dot side and put it inside the folder. Second, label the green-dot and red-dot sides with words that show what they are to help you remember. You might write 'Go' and 'Stop' or 'Still working' and 'Feels like I finished,' or 'Ongoing work' and 'Finished work.' You decide.

"Once you're done labeling each side of your folder, bring it to the rug with you."

Share writing from today's workshop that reflects last year's teaching and elicit their responses.

I had placed some charts and mentor texts from last year on the blackboard tray, in a display. I revealed them as children gathered on the rug, and let children have a moment to exclaim over them. "I'm going to read a few of the pieces you wrote today. As I do, will you notice some things from last year's teaching that your classmates have done to make their Small Moment stories the best they could be? These charts and books can remind you of what you learned last year.



You will want to make a fuss as you pass out the writing folders, reminding students the special care writers take to keep their writing safe. This will become an important tool for them this year, as it has been in previous years, so make sure you take the time to review how their writing folders will work.



"Listen to the last page of Fabiha's story. (See Figure 1–1.) Notice what she remembered to do when telling her small moment from the first-grade chart." I read just one page Fabiha's writing.

One bright sunny day, me and my brother were playing in the Xbox. "I'm bored," I said lying down on the bed. "Me too," my brother said. "I wish we had something else to do" I said.

"So what do you see on our chart that Fabiha remembered to include?" To give children some support, I ran my pen under the quotation marks, the words *One bright sunny day*, and under the part about lying down on the bed. "Turn and tell your partner what you notice—more than one thing!" I gave them a moment and asked what they'd noticed.

"She made people talk in her story," Grace said.

"She told what people did. She said that they were playing on the Xbox," Brandon said. "And lying on the bed!"

"She told us the setting!" Stephen called out.

Encourage students to draw on last year's instruction as they write.

"Fantastic." Then I said to the class, "I know you might be thinking, 'I forgot to do those things in my story!' Don't worry, writers, every day we will have workshop time, just like in kindergarten and first grade. You will have time to work on your stories. Tomorrow you can revise your work to include some of the things you noticed here, and when you start new pieces, you won't want to forget these moves that make small moments so powerful!"

"Writers, quickly and quietly get up from your spot on the rug, go back to your tables, and put your treasure chest of writing in your caddies, at your tables. Table monitors, can you please make sure that you take all the writing materials to the writing center? Off you go!"

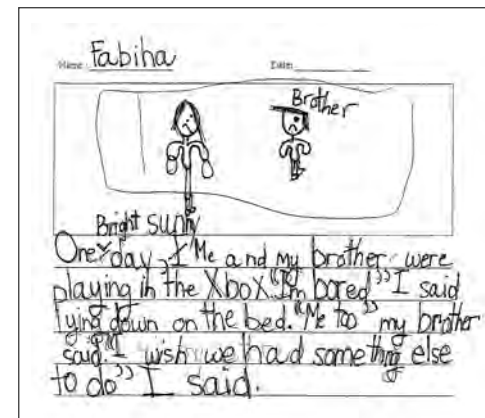


FIG. 1–1 This first page of Fabiha's Small Moment story shows how she added a variety of details to stretch out the beginning.



Session 2

Capturing Story Ideas

Tiny Topics Notepads

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach children that writers capture everyday moments and save them as possible story ideas to write later.

GETTING READY

- ✓ Two Jane Yolen quotations (see Connection and Share)
- ✓ 2" × 1" Tiny Topics notepads, one for each child; buy spirals and cut them in thirds (see Connection)
- ✓ A pen for the Active Engagement of the minilesson
- ✓ Construction paper that will fit neatly on the covers of the Tiny Topics notepads; write each child's name on a cover and paper-clip these onto the spiral notebooks; have extras on hand (see Share)
- ✓ Your Tiny Topics notepad (see Teaching)
- ✓ A couple of student examples (Share)
- ✓ *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen, to be read in its entirety after this second session and before Session 3, during read-aloud

PROFESSIONAL WRITERS KNOW the importance of keeping a small notebook on hand wherever they go because they know that an idea can strike at any moment—and that it can just as easily be forgotten. Today you'll give children each their very own Tiny Topics notepad so that they, too, can capture their ideas as they occur. This may seem like small business—and it's true that today's teaching is relatively simple—but you'll convey two important messages through it.

The first is that story ideas live all around us, in the smallest moments and objects. Ideas are in the details of life, in the ladybug that lands on your finger, the touch of your grandmother's hands, the grin on the new kid's face when she gives you a turn on the swings. Ideas that lead to powerful stories often stem from the tiniest things—if you slow down and take note of them.

The second message is that people who notice the details and imagine the ways to spin them into stories live differently. They live as writers. "From today on," you'll say, "you'll live differently because you'll become the kind of person who doesn't just turn into a writer during writing workshop, but who lives *life* as a writer. You'll wake up as a writer, eat breakfast as a writer, walk to school as a writer, go to bed as a writer—everywhere you go and everything you do from this day on you will do as a writer." The notepad will embody this new emphasis on living wide-awake, attentive lives, like real authors.

The hope is that today's teaching will inspire a flurry of ideas, and that children will find significance in observations of their own, unprompted. However, if you think your particular class of students will need additional scaffolding, you might remind children of the strategies for generating ideas that they learned last year: thinking about things that they have done or that have happened to them, or of times they had strong feelings.

Of course, you won't want children to spend the entire workshop finding and jotting ideas in their notepads. You'll share the kinds of details you notice and show your class how you quickly jot just a few words as a reminder to yourself, and then pick one to write about. You'll give children a chance to practice this themselves before sending them off to write, write, write.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.2.3; RL.2.1; SL.2.1.a; L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.3



MINILESSON

Capturing Story Ideas

Tiny Topics Notepads

CONNECTION

Ask table monitors to set up workshop and convene writers.

"Table monitors, remember where the caddies are? Folders and writing tools? Please set up workshop for us. Everyone, come to the meeting area with a pen. There is something special waiting for you at your rug spot. I know you may be tempted to take a look at it and investigate, but if you just wait a few minutes, I'll explain to you exactly what it is."

Remind students to watch for little things that could become stories and to record these in their Tiny Topics notepads.

I read aloud the quotation I'd written on chart paper, which comes from Jane Yolen's website, janeyolen.com.

"Every time I get an idea, I write it down and file it in my Idea File."

"Writers, we need to keep 'idea files' too. I was thinking you all might want to live writerly lives just like Jane, Angela, and other writers in the world. I've got something very special for each of you, right there on the rug in front of you!" I held up one of the tiny notepads. "This is a Tiny Topics notepad for *you*. It can be *your* 'idea file.' Yesterday you learned that writers like Jane Yolen write with details because they live with details—you can too! Writers find stories in the lost mitten—the walk in the rain—footprints in the snow—and they jot them down to write out later."

✿ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that just as writers collect little, tiny details that they can later turn into stories, you can do the same thing. You can do this at lunch, at home, on the playground—whenever you find a good idea or remember something you want to write, you can just jot it down."

◆ COACHING

You'll do this automatically from now on.

Prior to students gathering in the meeting area, I had set out Tiny Topics notepads on each of their rug spots.

Details convey worlds more than generalizations. I said, "Writers find stories in the lost mitten—the walk in the rain—footprints in the snow . . ." rather than simply saying, "Writers find stories in small details."

TEACHING

Demonstrate getting an idea for a story from a tiny event and jotting it down to develop later.

"So, if you are out in the world or in school and come up with a great idea for a story, write it down for later! Let's practice a little, right here, right now. Let's in our mind take a little trip through our day so far. Let's see if a little detail could spark a story for us!

"I will go first. Let me think about the day so far. Oh, I know an example! Earlier I looked at those birds we heard singing outside our window. They were beautiful, but disrupting our reader's workshop! Remember? I could write that down in my tiny notepad. But I don't want to write down ALL those words. I want to just write a couple of words to hold on to that idea. I could write, 'birds singing' or 'birds disturbing us.' Either one will help me remember what my story is so that I could write about it later. I am going to write down, 'birds disturbing us.' Just three words. Here I go." I opened my Tiny Topics notepad and wrote it quickly right there in front of them and held it up for them to see. I stressed the idea that it is a quick jotting.

"Did you see that? Did you see how quick and short I wrote it? But *what* I wrote will remind me about the story that I want to write."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Ask children to think back over their day to find a small moment that could become a story, then jot it down to write about later.

"Can you try that, right here, before you start working on your writing? Do you have an idea for a future story? Are there things happening around this classroom that you could turn into a story? Think across your day so far. Think for a moment and jot down one, two, or even more ideas in *your* Tiny Topics notepad." I gave children a minute of silence, knowing some—only some—would use this time to write.

"Writers, may I stop you? Isabelle already wrote two things. On one page, she jotted, 'almost falling on the ice.' That's one tiny topic she could write. On the next page she wrote, 'too small coat' because last night she tried on her coat and the sleeves came to here on her"—I gestured to my elbow—"and she could write about how that felt! If she decides to turn that into a story, will she write the whole story here, in her Tiny Topics notepad?"

"Nooooooo!" the students chorused.

"You're right. She'd get a booklet like this"—I held up a five-page booklet from the writing center—"to write her whole story. Keep going—try to get one more idea!" I gave them a few more seconds to try to get one more idea down on the page. I watched Patrick, and as soon as he finished writing "win game" I stopped the class.

Today's minilesson presents the concept that we get ideas for fiction from the moments and issues of our lives. Then the minilesson channels writers to reread their notebooks, expecting to find ideas that could be developed into stories.

All the kids won't totally "get" the idea of what to put into the notepads (a phrase capturing their topic idea, as in "knocking down icicles") versus the four-page booklets (the Small Moment story, like those they've written all year). You may need to confer or lead strategy lessons to help them.

Share the writing a few students did to help generate even more ideas.

"Let's hear from some others. What did you jot down on your notepad to turn into a story?" I invited the class to share out.

"'Purring on the chair' because my cats sleeps next to me," Ramon said.

"'Mom left,'" Grace said. "It's a story about when my mom left me in my class and she forgot to say to good-bye to me."

"I wrote, 'cherry pie' and I can almost taste it right now!" Justin said.

LINK

Let writers know that jotting down small moments that will make good stories is a habit that will serve them for a lifetime of writing.

"You are all thinking of so many moments that will make fabulous stories!" I said. "Today, tonight, and tomorrow—and forever!—be on the lookout for the small things in your lives that could make memorable stories and catch them! Write them down! Be like Jane Yolen; be a writer. Listening and looking closely and not letting everything pass you by. You'll be able to write with details because you'll live with details. Start now!"

Remind writers of strategies they know to get an idea, and ask them to use those or other ideas to get started writing.

"Remember, if you don't have an idea yet for a story, you can do a few things as a writer." I used my fingers to list off the suggestions. "You can get inspiration from our books in the writer center; you can look at your Tiny Topics notepad for an idea that you jotted; or, you can spend a little time and think about the details in this room or in your day, weekend, or life, and jot down a few ideas. Once you have a few ideas, though, start your writing! We are all going to fill up our folders with stories. Good luck writers, off you go!"

I know that as children call out ideas, this will help those who need some support.

Because this is early in a new unit, I want children to be inspired. I want them to believe, as I do, that there is something majestic about finding significance in the small moments of our lives and writing these as stories. I also want to spell out very concrete, doable strategies they can use today.



CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Support Elaboration Before and After Children Write

AS YOU CONFER WITH STUDENTS in the first few days of school, you will find that you will need to support some students in saying more—either from the start or after they’ve written their story. If they haven’t yet written the story, it helps to ask them to tell you the story.

As I pulled up a chair next to Mallika, I began by asking her what her writing plan for the day was. It is just as important to know how a writer plans to go about writing as it is to know information about the subject the writer has selected. She told me that her plan was to write about the supermarket, going shopping with her mom.

I pressed on. “How will that story go, Mallika? I know you haven’t written it, but how will you tell it?” If, as I listen to the child’s story, it sounds like a sort of “laundry list”

of actions, I tend to follow up by asking, “What made this time so memorable? What was the main thing that happened?”

“I accidentally put the food in the wrong cart!” Mallika responded.

I responded as a genuine, interested reader. “Really? That’s so funny! What actually happened? Walk me through everything!” Generally, once children have had a chance to rehearse their stories a bit, the words flow more smoothly. By giving Mallika a chance to oral story-tell with me, I knew she’d be able to write faster and longer than usual. I dictated her first words to her, waited as she wrote a few of them, and then left her to write (see Figure 2–1). When Mallika came up for air, I said, “Mallika, do you realize that you wrote longer about this story and more quickly

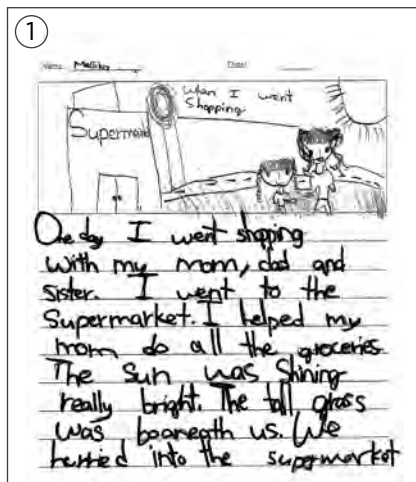
MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Give Your Writing a Small Moment Check**

“One two three, eyes on me,” I chanted, from the middle of the classroom. No one stopped writing or chatting. I tried once more, “Writers!” Suddenly all the writers looked up from their tables. “One two three, all eyes on me!” I chanted again. “Thank you for looking at me! I have something I want to quickly teach you. When I need your attention, I am going to always sing, ‘One two three, eyes on me.’ And you all can chant back, ‘One two, eyes on you!’ Shall we try it?” We practiced once more.

“There is one more thing that I want to teach you. Last year, you all wrote small moments. You wrote about tiny topics, small seed ideas. Remember, you didn’t write about the big topic—the watermelon—you chose one small idea. Well, I have noticed that some of your stories are those *big* stories that seem to have lots of little seed stories in them—lots of tiny topics! This happens to me all the time. Instead of writing about just one small moment, I wrote about my whole trip to the beach. I wrote about going for a swim with my friend Frances, looking for shells alone on

the beach, and eating lunch on the beach. I need to pick one moment, and write about that. The other stories I can write down in my Tiny Topics notepad so that I can write about them another day. That gives me a whole lineup of stories to write! I can also rip off the pages of this story and put them in the ‘Work in Progress’ side of my folder. That way I can start these stories on another day.

“Look at the story you are writing right now. Are you writing a story about a small moment, like my story about the birds singing, or is your story more similar to this beach story, that has lots of Tiny Topics inside of it? Look at yours and decide. If you are writing about a lot of moments, pick one and write down the extra story ideas in your notepad for a new day. Pull those pages off and put them into your folder. If you are writing a Small Moment story, keep going. Then when you finish, just give it a double check! Give it the ‘Small Moment’ check.”



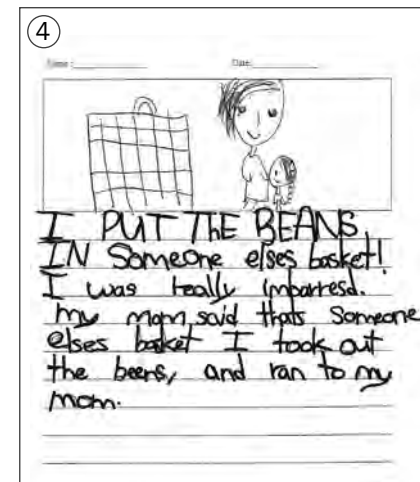
One day I went shopping with my mom, dad and sister. I went to the supermarket. I helped my mom do all the groceries. The sun was shining really bright. The tall grass was beneath us. We hurried into the supermarket.



My mom told me to put some food in a basket. The food was some okra beans. I held the okra beans in my hand and walked.



I went towards my basket. I was looking somewhere else. I didn't know what I was doing. So by accident . . .



I PUT THE BEANS IN someone else's basket! I was really embarrassed. My mom said, "That's someone else's basket." I took out the beans and ran to my mom.

FIG. 2-1 Mallika's piece shows how the writer stretches out her small moment tiny topic across pages after she had an opportunity to rehearse it first.

than ever? Did you notice that? I hope you remember that what worked for you today is something you can try from now on—you can always find a writing partner to talk to about your story before you write. That kind of rehearsal works for many writers, and it certainly worked for you today! Don't forget that you can do that any time that you are writing."

Of course, you won't always be able to talk to a child before the youngster embarks on a story, so there are times when your interaction occurs after a story is written.

I watched Grace write quickly, one sentence on one page, another sentence on the next page, and another on the next. She looked like she was sprint-writing! Her handwriting was larger than normal, and she was racing through each page. Midway through the fourth page (and the fourth line), I asked if I could interrupt her. I complimented Grace on finding a topic and turning it into a small moment, but then pressed to see if she had plans for revision, "So, can you tell me your plans for your story?" I leaned in closely.

"Well, I just wrote it. And now you can read it, and the kids can," Grace said as she packed the story away in her writing folder and closed the folder securely.

"Grace, I'm confused." I brought the story out and read it:

I thought my mom had left me.
I looked for her
And I couldn't find her.
And I looked some more.
And then
I found her.

It doesn't look like you've gone back to revise your story yet. I would understand you saying, 'I'll just forget about that story' if this was a story that you don't care about, but it sounds like one that really matters! And it took you about five seconds to write it! Don't you think it deserves more time?"

"Umm, I guess so . . . "

After she said aloud what she saw in her mind's eye, I encouraged her to add that writing to the page. Then I reminded her that writers imagine their story moment by moment, almost like a movie. That helps them find and record the details their stories need.

These two conferences could even be used as minilessons, if you find that many of your children could benefit from thinking in these ways.



SHARE

Collecting Ideas for Small Moment Stories

Remind children of how to gather efficiently for the share portion of the workshop and praise their independence.

"Writers, it's time to gather. Will you put your writing in your folders and place your folders and writing tools in the caddies? Hold onto your Tiny Topic notepads though, you will need to bring those to the meeting area with you. Table monitors, will you clean up the writing and put everything in the writing center? Everyone else, join me in the meeting area, quickly and quietly.

"I saw that in workshop, you were all very busy, writing. I even noticed that when some of you finished you didn't just sit there, wondering what was going to happen next. No, you just took out your tiny notepads and started a new story. That is independence for you!"

Remind children of a strategy they can use when they are stuck and can't think of what to write about. In this case, remind them they can look at and listen to the world around them for ideas.

"But sometimes, writing doesn't always go so smoothly. Even for me, sometimes I feel stuck and wonder, what should I write about? I have nothing to say. That will probably happen to you one of these days, too. Jane Yolen, the author of *Owl Moon* and many more books, writes on her author website:

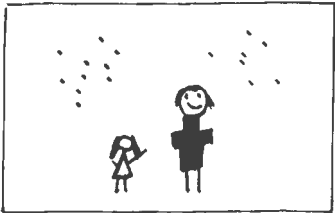
I am always asked where I get my ideas from. That is a very difficult question to answer, since I get my ideas from everywhere: from things I hear and things I see, from books and songs and newspapers and paintings and conversations. (janeyolen.com)

"And then I remember: writers can get an idea from almost anything! Don't forget to look and listen all around you when you are trying to find what to write about.

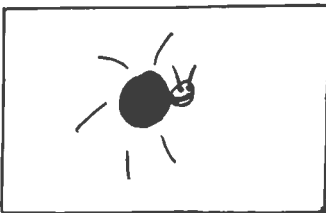
"Right now, can you share with the person next to you what your idea was today and where it came from?" I listened in to their conversations and shared a few examples, like Elizabeth's firefly story (see Figure 2–2).

"Before you go, listen because this is important. I'm going to give each one of you a cover for your Tiny Topics notepad. Tonight, find and note in your pad some small moments from your life, and also decorate this cover for your notepad so that it is your own. Don't forget! Tomorrow, you'll share more of the tiny topics you found!


"Right now, if you sit at table 1, will you please come and get your cover from me? Then you can put your cover and your Tiny Topics notepad in your cubby to take home tonight. If you sit at table 2 . . . "



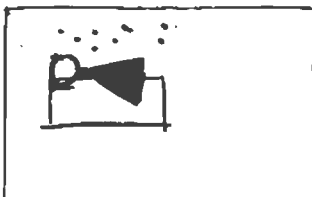
Me and my mom went to catch and see fire flies. Once when I was three years old me and my mom went to catch fire flies. We waited a little



until the fire flies came. Then we saw them! Their lights were glowing bright. My mom caught one. I tried to catch one also. Then suddenly I



caught one I yelled out! Then we caught more and more. We would let them go each time we caught them. then we would watch them



all go. Then we would go home go to bed and dream about fire flies.

Me and my mom went to catch and see fireflies. Once when I three years old me and my mom went to catch fireflies. We waited a little

until the fireflies came. Then we saw them! Their lights were glowing bright. My mom caught one. I tried to catch one also. Then suddenly I

caught one. I yelled out! Then we caught more and more. We would let them go each time we caught them. Then we would watch them

all go. Then we would go home, go to bed, and dream about fireflies.

FIG. 2–2 In Elizabeth's Small Moment story, she stretches the idea from her Tiny Topic notepad across pages, telling the reader bit by bit what happened.

Stretching Out Small Moments, as Authors Do



TODAY'S TEACHING builds directly on what your students learned in the previous session. Children will come to school with tiny topics, tiny moments, inscribed in their notepads. Your challenge will be to help them turn these jotted notes into well-structured Small Moment stories. Last year, if your students were in a writing workshop, they will have had ample opportunity to practice Small Moment stories. Today, you will quickly remind them of the lessons they learned during their Small Moment and Fiction study: how to plan for how their stories will unfold across a series of pages, to write focused narratives, and to write with details. Then you will introduce two new elements to the planning work children will try out today. You will teach them that writers often record a few key words at the top of each page as reminders of what will go on that page, and you will teach them how to plan each *portion* of a story. Specifically, you will teach that just as a story has a beginning, middle, and end, so too does each of a story's parts. In this way, then, you add to children's writing-planning repertoire while also increasing the level of sophistication with which they plan—and the degree of detail and elaboration with which they will soon write.

Before today's minilesson, it will be important to have read *Owl Moon* to the class at least once, and preferably the day before, during read-aloud so that it is fresh in children's minds. Today, when you reread it, talk with the class about what Jane Yolen may have written down as she planned for writing this story.

In the teaching portion of this session, you will demonstrate telling your own story across your fingers, jotting a few key words on each page of a booklet, and then you will show how to plan the beginning, middle, and end of just one part of your own story. You'll offer children a chance to try this work themselves, in partnerships, before they go off to write.

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach children what it looks and sounds like when writers tell the whole story of a tiny moment.

GETTING READY

- ✓ Students' Tiny Topics notepads and pencils (see Connection)
- ✓ Your own Tiny Topics notepad with details jotted on a few pages (see Teaching)
- ✓ Your own five-page booklet (see Teaching)
- ✓ Sharpened pencils, pens
- ✓ Scissors, tape, and staplers for revision
- ✓ Stapled booklets for writers, each containing four or five pages
- ✓ *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen, or other mentor text, which you will have read with your class the day prior during your read-aloud (see Share)
- ✓ Post-it notes (see Share)
- ✓ Lanyards, or yarn, to turn the Tiny Topics notepads into necklaces (see Share)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.2.3; RL.2.1, RL.2.5, RL.2.10; SL.2.1, SL.2.4; L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.3



MINILESSON

Stretching Out Small Moments

CONNECTION

Match children with long-term writing partners.

"Today, as you set up for workshop, you will see that I have designated rug spots for everyone in our meeting area. You'll see a piece of tape with your name on it in one of the squares on our rug. You'll also see that next to your name is the number 1 or 2, and that the person sitting next to you has the *other* number. That person will be your writing partner. Let's set up for writing workshop. Table monitors, get your caddies! Second-graders, get your notepads! Meet me at the rug."

Tell about one child who used his notepad the evening before to record a tiny detail. Remind children that writers not only *write* but also *live* with details.

"Last year, you wrote Small Moment stories, filled with details, across many pages. Now you are searching, once again, for tiny topics to tell, about your lives. Yesterday we read *Owl Moon*, and some of you said Jane probably jotted 'owling in the morning' in her Tiny Topics notepad before she wrote this story. Will you each take out your notepad and show your writing partner what ideas you have been collecting for future writing projects?" I let the kids quickly share some of their work.

"I forgot to jot down ideas at home?" Rocio said, with a questioning tone in her voice, as if to ask, "What should I do?"

"Well, now is always a good time!" I said, then added, "If you are getting an idea just by listening to your partner, jot it down! That's why you carry your notepads." After a minute of sharing, I brought the class back together. "Writers, you are brimming with story ideas! Now what will you do with all these? Hmm, . . . You need to turn them into stories!"

✿ Name the teaching point.

"Today, writers, I want to teach you how to develop a tiny topic like 'three strikes' into a whole story. Remember, writers don't just think up a topic and then suddenly 'poof,' there is a story. Writers plan and let their stories grow by trying things out and thinking as they write."

◆ COACHING

You will want to decide on some routines and structures that will give your workshop an efficient flow. Many teachers find it helpful for students to have regular rug spots. This way, rather than negotiating over the place where they will sit each day, students give their full attention to the day's lesson. You may also want to designate numbers or letters to help students decide who will go first in their turn-and-talks. This scaffold may be useful if students have a hard time taking turns or just remembering who went first the last time. It also helps to ensure more equity in the talk and conversations.

Think of Tiny Topic notepads as the training wheels for notebooks. They are a place to collect ideas and then later, to mine for new writing projects. Encourage your students to carry these notepads with them everywhere they go, and to jot ideas in them, all the time. This helps your students "try on" the kind of work that grown up writers do, and it conveys the important message that they can live as writers always, even when they aren't writing.

TEACHING

Tell students that tiny topics need to grow in their minds before they are written.

"When Jane Yolen wrote *Owl Moon*, she may have gotten the idea for the book from a note she'd written like 'owling at night.' But her story didn't just barge right out. She first took her topic and *let it grow in her mind*. She might have done a few things to help her plan. Maybe she told the whole story to herself, across her fingers, until it seemed right. Maybe she sketched out how her whole story was going to go and then started writing down the page. You all remember how to do those things from first grade, right? To move more quickly to her draft, Jane might have even written a couple of key words for each part of her story and *then* planned the beginning, middle and end of *each part*. Her story is *long*!

"Writers, you have some decisions to make. You could practice telling your story across your fingers or you could write key words. Either way, though, you will need to plan!

"See, like you, I already wrote some tiny topics in my notepad." I held a page of my tiny spiral up for children to see. I read, "sparkling buildings." "Watch what I do with the tiny topic I wrote in my notepad so that you can do it, too. Notice how I plan my story and pay attention to the steps I take so you can take them!

"Before I write my story, it helps if I tell it to myself. So I am going to do that across my fingers, just like all of you did in first grade. I'm also going to turn to the pages and write a couple of key words to hold onto the parts of my story. I'll write the beginning, middle, and end of each part, down the page. Watch me."

"Hmm, . . . Okay. I want to tell—I have to think what the whole story will be. Hmm . . ." I held out a clenched hand and opened one finger at a time as I began to tell my story. "The rain stopped and I was on a cross-town bus. It was crowded." I continued opening my fingers as I read on in the story, and jotted key words on each page of my booklet. "Finally we came to my stop. Everyone rushed to the door. I felt crushed."

I paused to keep thinking, and opened my third finger, "We slowly made our way out the door. Suddenly I realized there was a gigantic puddle between the bus and the curb. What was I going to do? I forgot my rain boots! So I decided to jump!"

As I showed children my fourth finger, I whispered, "My story is coming to an end!" Then, I continued, "I jumped with all my might but I landed right in the center of the puddle. *Splash!* Water flew everywhere!" All the kids laughed.

I held out my last finger, "I jumped up on the curb as quickly as I could. I looked like a drowned rat. I was so upset! But then I looked up and saw those sparkling buildings and felt so much happier!" The kids applauded.

"Thank you, writers, but that is just the first step—figuring out how my story goes. Look what I did as I was telling my story." I held up my five-page booklet. Each page had a couple of words jotted at the top. "See, I jotted a couple of words at the top of each page to remember what each part of my story is about. This page is about sitting on the

Notice that I tell children that writers don't just think up a topic and write it, but instead they plan. Of course, it's doubtful that Jane told this story across her fingers but it helps to suggest she may have done something like that! Keep in mind that whether children tell their stories across their fingers or by writing key words at the top of each page in their booklet, saying what they might write, the big lesson is that writers rehearse for writing.

Here I don't just explain that I first wrote a topic, then wrote a story. Instead, I reenact the process, starting with the words "Watch me." Reenacting (or dramatizing) gives children a demonstration. Demonstrations are vastly more effective than explanations.

cross-town bus—it says ‘Sit on the bus.’ (See Figure 3–1.) This page is about getting off and feeling crushed. It says, ‘My stop. Crushed.’ Each page has the plan of what I am going to write. Now I’m ready to write the beginning, middle, and end of each page. I’ll do the first page right now.”

The rain had just stopped. I was sitting on the cross-town bus, staring out the window, watching the sky turn pale blue. I saw people open their jackets. I saw puddles misting in the sun. Suddenly I looked up and all around me the buildings were sparkling.

“See how I took a tiny topic and got ready to write? I did three things. First, I thought about how my story was going to go by telling it across my fingers. Then, I jotted a few words across the pages to remember what I wanted to write. Then, I started thinking about the beginning, middle, and end of my first page and got to writing!”

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Ask the class to take an idea from their notepads and grow it into a story, telling the story to a partner.

“Let’s try this, right here, right now. Look in your notepad for a story idea that you have filed away. If you don’t have one, jot one now quickly. How will your story go? Take out your hand and, just to yourself, start to tell it across your fingers. What did you do or hear or notice first?” I took out my fingers and pretended to tell another story, mumbling under my breath.

“Now, pick up your booklet. Partner 1, tell Partner 2 what key words you might jot down on each page to remember what to write.”

LINK

Remind children how Jane Yolen might have gotten the idea for her story, emphasizing that they can do the same—they can find and record small moments.

“You are really getting good at finding tiny topics! Tiny topics are in your lives everywhere. When you go from a tiny topic to a story, remember to give your story time to grow. As you plan your stories, remember, you can do the things you learned last year, but you can also try something new, like jotting down words and planning the beginning, middle, and end of each page.”

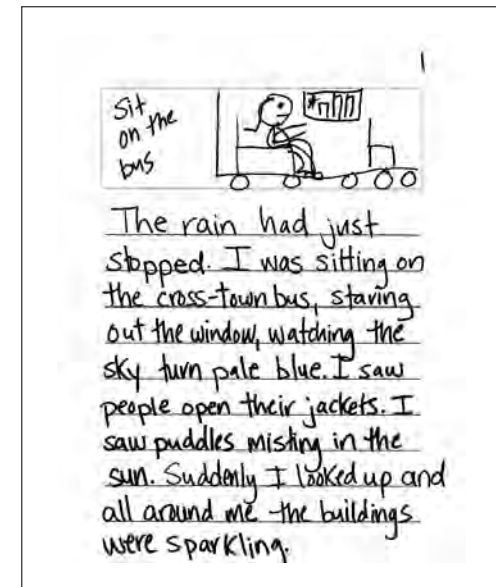


FIG. 3–1 A couple of words jotted at the top of the page reminds writers what each part of the story is about.

I have set the children up to try the very thing I described. There are no machinations—children are set to go and can simply turn to their partner and start. It isn't necessary for children to report back. The point is to give them a minute to try something.

I am using a metaphor to describe the writing process. I may want to convene my English language learners and be more explicit about what I mean when I say, “Give your story time to grow.”



Scaffolding Students to Orally Rehearse Their Writing

AS YOU CONFER TODAY, you're bound to encounter some predictable problems. If you have a group of children whose pieces tend to be disconnected, or told almost as a list, with no clear sense of story, rehearsal will be all the more important. Gather these children together and teach them that they can rehearse their stories by touching each page and saying aloud the words they'll write. You might select one child's story to highlight as an example. Share the child's story with the group, then restate the first page, using more story-like language. If the child says, "I go skating in the park," you might say, "Aha, 'One day, I went skating in the park.'" Then turn to the child and ask, "When, exactly, did you go skating?" After learning the time, show the group how to combine the time and the action. Say, "So Alex might begin his story, 'Yesterday afternoon, I went skating in the park.' Do you see how now the story has a time and a place?"

Sometimes the feeling of disconnection in a piece of writing comes from sentences that read as stand-alone lines. Imagine Alex's story about skating continues in this way: "I fell down. My knee was bloody. It hurt." Although the parts are told chronologically, they don't yet have a story feel. Here you might show Alex and the rest of the group how to connect the different parts of the story by dressing up the words around them: "*Suddenly, I fell down. I looked at my knee and saw that it was bloody. Ouch! It hurt.*" Kids will enjoy watching you add a little drama to their writing, and you, meanwhile, can use this to teach. You won't say, "Look, I added a transition word here, and a conjunction there" (unless you want to turn this into a small-group session on connecting words). Instead, place the emphasis on storytelling in ways that connect all the parts on a page—on writing a story that flows and holds together.

Meanwhile, you will want to also give attention to your more advanced writers as they rehearse and plan. These children may write lively pieces that are sequentially told, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. They may write at some length, elaborating with detail. Often their problem is the opposite of children who write list-like sentences. These children write stories that have an almost breathless, run-on quality. These children also benefit from planning, but their next step may be to give shape to

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Writers Grow Each Page of Their Stories

"Writers, can I stop you for a moment? Listen to what Gresha just did. She had written, 'doing Sara's hair,' in her Tiny Topics notepad to remind her how she does her little sister's hair in the mornings. But she didn't just write that story straight away. Instead she remembered that Jane Yolen lets her idea *grow in her mind* before she starts writing.

"Listen to how Gresha told *her* story. Instead of just writing on the first page, 'I did my sister's hair,' she starts her story, 'Sara stood on the stool by the mirror. Her hair had knots in it. I brushed and brushed to get the knot out. It was hard to do.' Don't you love how you can hear the beginning, middle, and end of just that very first part of her story? Listen to it again, 'Sara stood on the stool by the mirror. Her hair had knots in it.' That is the beginning. Now listen to the middle. 'I brushed the knots. It was hard to do.' Now listen to the end of the page, 'Sara started to cry.'

"Wow, Gresha, this is only the first page! Writers, do you see how Gresha has told us all about the first part of her story? It's long and detailed, isn't it? She told the beginning of what happened—and the middle—and the end! Gresha, what happens next?"

"I wiped my sister's tears."

"That's the next page? Beautiful! One page about wiping your sister's tears! I can already imagine it, can't you, second-graders? I'm picturing Gresha getting up, grabbing a tissue, handing it to her sister, or maybe even wiping her sister's face gently herself."

(continues)

(continued)

"I also put barrettes in Sara's hair," Gresha offered.

"Does that go on this page?" I turned the page and looked at Gresha. She nodded.

"Writers, will you look at the page you are on, or turn back to the beginning of your book, and think about the beginning, middle, and end of how your page goes? And share it with your neighbor so that you can be sure that you are doing what Gresha is doing—really pushing your story down the page, not just across!

"Okay, back to writing, second-graders. Try and fill up your lines. If you need to use a flap, to extend the page further, there are flaps and staplers in your writing caddies in the center of your table. There are always extra booklets, pages, and flaps in our writing center as well. When you need to, don't forget to get the materials that you need."

As Students Continue Working . . .

"While you've been writing, Kenzy just lost her tooth. She is in the middle of another story, but she didn't want to forget about the tooth, so she jotted it in her Tiny Topics notepad. Some of the rest of you may find things happening to you, or come to your mind, as you're writing—and I know you'll use your Tiny Topics notepad to hold these ideas for later."

what's already on the page—rather than add to it. Suggest that they read their writing out loud to see how it sounds—and which parts are especially full of details, and which ones a little more sparse. Then they can return to their writing and think about whether they've elaborated in ways that work best to showcase their story.

Consider, for example, Rocio's piece, "Come Out Snail!" (see Figure 3–2). Notice how Rocio has made a plan for what to write by jotting a couple words at the top of each page, along with a quick sketch. The strategy has clearly worked for her as each page does, in fact, follow her plan.

Notice, too, that the words and sketches have helped Rocio write with focus; this is a Small Moment story.

Look at the piece again. Do all the parts feel equal? In fact, some parts are more elaborated upon than others. Certainly, you won't expect children to elaborate in equal amounts on each part of a story, but for advanced writers like Rocio, a natural next step might be to ask themselves whether they have elaborated in ways that show the reader what most matters about this story. Rocio might look at her story's beginning, middle, and end, and ask, "Do I need to add details to any of these parts to make them jump out more?" and "Do I need to delete some of the details that aren't that important?" She might notice, for example, that the color of the snail's shell doesn't have anything to do with the happenings with the snail, but the fact that kids were nervous to touch it does. Maybe she wants to tell about what the shell feels like, instead. She might decide to build up her first two pages to show how nervous the kids were as they got ready to hold and touch the snail. Rocio might also discover that the part in which the snail comes out is well elaborated, but that it reads more as a summary than a story. This is where rehearsal is key. If Rocio were to practice reading aloud her story, she would hear the places where it feels more like telling, and less like a story.

Of course, your children will have written pieces on topics other than a snail in a classroom, but the suggestions to Rocio about her story are transferable to any more advanced writer. Thinking about which details bring out meaning, checking to be sure a piece is elaborated across the pages, rather than in just one part—are tips that will apply to any child who is ready to take his or her story to the next level.



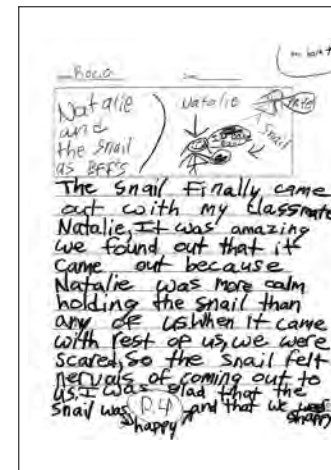
It was first grade, the twins in my class brought their pet snail. The color shell was beige and white. It was so cool!



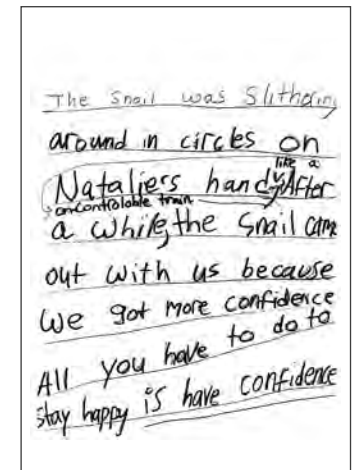
The twins took out the snail, and started passing around the snail in our hands.



The snail would not get out of its glimmering shell. Some people got nervous, because they thought it was injured, or dead, or just scared of us.



The snail finally came out with my classmate Natalie. It was amazing. We found out that it came out because Natalie was more calm holding the snail more than any of us. When it came with the rest of us, we were scared. So, the snail felt nervous of coming out to us. I was glad that the snail was happy and that we were happy.



The snail was slithering around in circles on Natalie's hand like an uncontrollable train. After a while, the snail came out with us because we got more confidence. All you have to do to stay happy is have confidence.

FIG. 3-2 Rocio's "Come Out Snail!"



SHARE

Reading Like Writers

Remind writers of ways to prepare for the writing workshop.

"Writers, before you come over to the meeting area, will you first decide whether your piece of writing is 'finished for now' or whether you are still working on it—whether it's 'a work in progress.' If you are 'finished for now' you can place your story on the red-dot side of your folder, just like you did in the last session. If it is 'still in progress,' place it on the green-dot side. When you have decided, place your folders in the caddy at your tables and join me in the meeting area—quickly and . . . "

"Quietly!" the class boasted.

Tell writers that to become great authors, they need to read like a writer, noticing what the author has done.

"Can you say that *quietly*? Let's try it again! Quickly and . . . "

"Quietly," the class whispered this time.

"Writers, I once read advice that Jane Yolen offered to young writers like yourselves. Do you know what her first suggestion was? 'Read, read, read! You must read every day, and try to read a wide range of books' (janeyolen.com). So I thought, in our share, let's do just that. Let's read *Owl Moon* and think about the different parts of Jane's story! Then let's pick out which ones feel the most important and why we think so. Ready? Let's read."

Encourage children to keep up the routine of taking home their Tiny Topics notepads and gathering ideas for their writing all day long.

"Earlier, some of you were asking if you could carry your Tiny Topics notepads around with you at lunch and on the playground to write down more tiny details that you don't want to forget. That's a good idea. I'll help you turn your notepads into necklaces so you can carry them everywhere." I quickly connected students' notepads to a lanyard they could wear around their necks. You could also use yarn to create notepad necklaces.

Students can use yarn or lanyards to string their notepads into necklaces. It helps if the lace goes through three of the top spirals of the tiny topics notepad and continues around the child's neck. New materials are a major source of motivation for little children, so parse the new materials out bit by bit when the time is right. The necklaces make the notepads more portable so it's perfect to bring this adaptation now.

"Can I take home a booklet as well?" Elizabeth asked.

"Yes, of course. Before you go home today, remember to pack your notepads. If you need to take a booklet or two home, so that you can write your stories down tonight, I'll make time this afternoon for everyone to collect the things you need. Thank you, Elizabeth, for raising this question."



Writing with Detail

Magnifying a Small Moment

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that writers zoom in on a small moment in their stories, magnifying it so that their reader can see, smell, taste, and feel it.

GETTING READY

- ✓ A concrete object for your class to study closely (we use seashells), enough for partners to share (see Connection)
- ✓ Magnifying glasses, enough for partners or small groups to share (see Connection)
- ✓ *Owl Moon*, by Jane Yolen, or another mentor text to study zooming in on a small moment (see Teaching)
- ✓ Your own Small Moment story, the one you started in Session 3 (see Teaching)
- ✓ Student writing folders (see Active Engagement)
- ✓ Tools for revision, including revision strips and flaps, scissors, tape, and staplers (see Link)
- ✓ Student writing folders, Post-its, and pens (see Share)
- ✓ One or two student examples of revision (see Share)

LAST YEAR, STUDENTS LEARNED how to select a small moment (seed) topic rather than a much larger (watermelon) topic. Today, you will give them a new metaphor to describe the work not of choosing an idea, but of stretching out a small moment with detail. You'll suggest that children "magnify" their small moments, noticing and recording what they see. This provides a concrete image of the work you hope children do, and it also links narrative writing to the work children have done in the content areas. I suggest you bring in as many magnifying glasses as you can so that children can first examine seashells (or another object of your choice), and then share the details they notice. By setting children up to think across various contexts, applying what they learn in one to the other, you set them up to engage in the kind of strategic, high-level cognitive work that Norman Webb describes as Level 4 in his Depth of Knowledge (DOK).

Although the teaching in this session is about seeing, you won't stop there. You'll tell children that writers use all of their senses to write. They notice and record not only what they see, but also what they hear, feel, smell, and taste to describe a moment in detail. They pay close attention to everything about the small moment they are trying to describe so that their readers can experience that moment as if they, too, were there. This is important work. Few things are as essential to good writing as writing "small" about something big. When children write about their lives with precise details, not generalities, when they record the exact sensory elements of that moment, they create lush, powerful narratives.

Today's session sets the stage for the craft work you will do in Bend III. It also reinforces a big theme of the unit—living like a writer. Your hope is that children will transfer this close study of the world not only to other writing units of study, but to the way they live outside of your room and outside of school.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.2.3, W.2.5, W.3.3.a; RL.2.1, RL.2.3, RL.2.4, RL.2.7; SL.2.1, SL.2.3; L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.3, L.2.5



MINILESSON

Writing with Detail

Magnifying a Small Moment

CONNECTION

Introduce the concrete object you'll be studying closely—seashells, flowers, or something else you choose—and then give one to each set of partners.

"Writers, give me a thumbs up if you've ever been to the beach." A flurry of thumbs went up. "Oh wow, lots of you have visited the beach! Thumbs up again if you collected shells when you were at the beach." Again, thumbs flew up. "Look at all the shell collectors we have in this room! Guess what, writers? I went to the beach this summer, and I collected shells, too. Look—I brought in some of my favorites. I'm going to pass these around. Partner 1, when you have a shell, put it between you and Partner 2. You two will share the shell in just a second."

Set children up to make close observations of their objects, zooming in on the details with the help of a magnifying glass.

Once the kids had shells I said, "Writers, remember last year when we studied worms in science? You looked at those really closely to describe what you noticed. You looked through magnifying glasses and saw lines on the worms' bodies, and watched how the worms moved. Right now, you are going to look *that* closely at your shells. I'm going to give each partnership a magnifying glass that will help you zoom in on the details of your shell. Pick up your shells and look closely at them. Talk to your partner about the things you notice."

As children talked, I listened in, taking note of their observations. Then I reconvened the class.

Share some childrens observations, pointing out the kinds of details they noticed.

"Writers, I want to share some of the things I heard you say just now. Lots of you described the colors of your shell. You said things like, 'It's pink and white' or 'It's light brown.' Some of you noticed the markings on your shell—lines and dots, squiggles and swirls. And some of you described the shapes of your shells—I heard words like *round, oval, fan shaped, cones*. Great noticing, writers. You really saw lots of detail in your shells. One of my favorite authors, Kate DiCamillo, once said, 'Writing is seeing. It is paying attention.'"

◆ COACHING

Teachers, you may need to alter this example to one that will ring true for your class. If you do not live close to the beach, perhaps you'll ask kids whether they have ever picked flowers in a park or a field (and then of course, you'll need to bring in flowers they can study).

If you don't have magnifying glasses, you can ask children to pretend they have them, and to look really, really closely, aiming to see details.

✿ Name the teaching point.

"Writers, that kind of seeing, paying attention, is at the heart of living a writerly life. Today I want to teach you that when writers want to zoom in on a small moment, to capture it so that readers see it as they do, they magnify it, by writing with lots of details."

TEACHING

Study one page of the mentor text, noticing how the author zooms in on a small moment to write with detail.

"Let me show you what I mean. I'm going to turn to a page in *Owl Moon*. I could pick any page to model this, so I'll just pick one randomly." I flipped open the book to the third page. "As I read, pay attention to the details Jane Yolen includes to describe this moment."

*We reached the line
of pine trees,
black and pointy
against the sky,
and Pa held up his hand.
I stopped right where I was
and waited.
He looked up,
as if searching the stars,
as if reading a map up there.
The moon made his face
into a silver mask.
Then he called:
"Whoo-whoo-who-who-who-whooooooooo,"
the sound of a Great Horned Owl.
"Whoo-whoo-who-who-who-whooooooooo."*

"Wow, I have goose bumps. The way Jane has written this, it's as if she held up a magnifying glass to this moment, just like each of you did with your shells just now. She could have just written, 'We reached the trees. Pa made an owl noise,' but that wouldn't have had nearly the same effect. So instead, she stretched out this moment with lots of tiny details that allow us to see the scene just as she imagined it.

"The first thing I notice is how Jane describes the pine trees as 'black and pointy against the sky.' Wow, it's like I'm seeing those trees through a magnifying glass—so tall they touch the sky!

"What else do I see? Hmm, . . . Oh! This part about how Pa 'looked up, as if searching the stars, as if reading a map up there.' Again, it's like Jane Yolen has magnified the moment for us. I can just picture how intently Pa is studying the sky, can you?

You will want them to work on envisioning the moment, step by step. You will want them to think about how the characters feel and why. Have your students almost pretend that they are owling and imagine what it was like. You will want them to work on retelling the parts as well as to think about what is important and why.

"I'll stop there. I'm sure we'll be looking at this part again sometime soon because there is so much in it to notice. But right now, it's enough to study how Jane magnifies the details she notices so that her reader can see them, too."

Demonstrate how to write like the mentor author, zooming in on your own Small Moment story and stretching it out with lots of details.

"So writers, if I were to do like Jane does and like what we as scientists do, I could try to write my own small moment by looking at it through an imaginary magnifying glass. Let me do that and think about what I might add. Here's the second page of my piece about riding the bus." I put my second page up on the white board (see Figure 4–1).

Finally we came to my stop. Everyone rushed to the door. I felt crushed.

"Hmm, . . . No details here yet. So let's see. If I want my readers to see exactly what I saw, as if they're looking through a magnifying glass at this little scene, what could I add? Well, I might include what I saw. I remember lots of people all around me. There was a tall man wearing headphones, and a couple of teenage girls, whose linked arms blocked my path. It was hard to squeeze through. So if I add those details, my page might go like this:

Finally we came to my stop. Everyone rushed to the door. A tall man, wearing headphones, swayed his body as he barged ahead of me. Two teenage girls, arms linked, blocked my path, making a barricade. I felt crushed."

"Is that clearer, writers? Can you see what happened on the bus with those new details added?" The kids nodded.

Notice that I have included a word that many second-graders may not know: barricade. This is intentional. It introduces children to new vocabulary, and allows me to scaffold them as they learn. Notice how when I talk about the scene on the bus I use other words children will know—blocked my path—to introduce what barricade means.

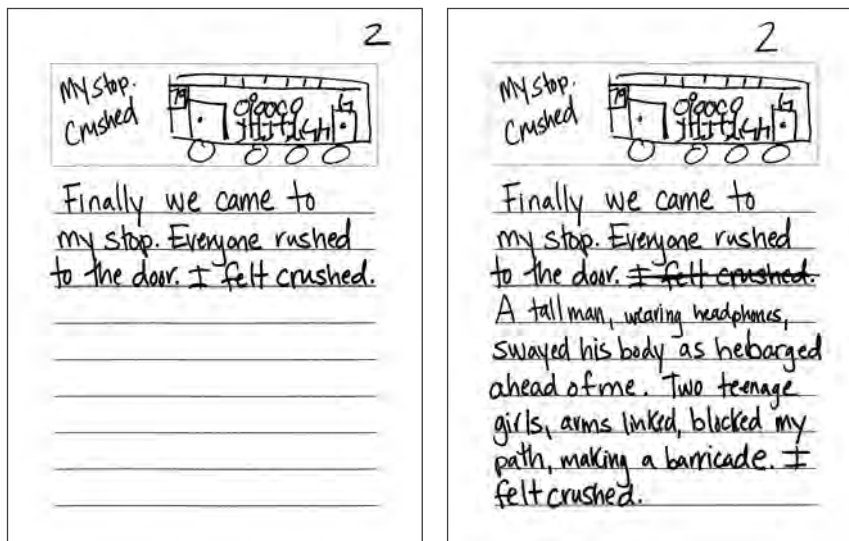


FIG. 4-1 First draft of page 2

Revised draft of page 2

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Recruit writers to zoom in on a small moment in their own stories, writing with detail. Voice over that they can use their partners for help.

"Writers, it's your turn to try this with your own writing. Open up your folders and take out the story you wrote yesterday." I gave them a second to do this. "Find a part of your story that's a little bare right now, that could use magnifying for your reader." After a moment, I said, "Now, turn to your partner and see if you can help each other 'hold magnifying glasses'"—I made quotation marks with my fingers—"to your writing."

I gave little voiceovers to the class as I coached into partnerships, "Help your partner think of the details that will help a reader picture what is there and what is happening."

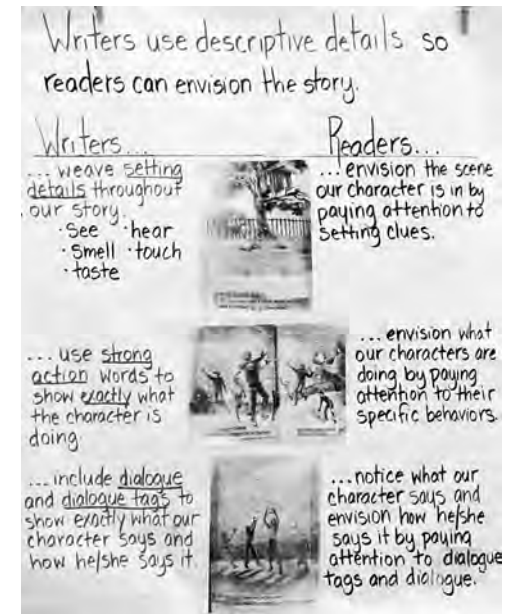
LINK

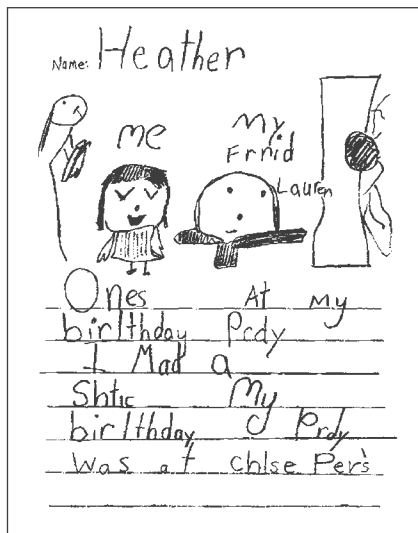
Send students off to write, and encourage them to add detail to their stories. Tuck in reminders of how to add on to their writing, and demonstrate one way.

"It may seem easy at first to add a detail here or there. But to add in details, the way that writers like Jane Yolen do, is hard work. It will take time and certainly a lot of practice! You can work on this as you write today. Some of you might be starting new stories and some of you might be adding into ones that you have finished.

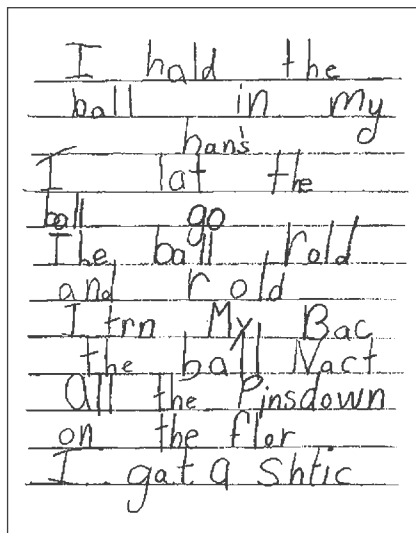
"Rocio was worried that she had no more space to add details. Remember, though, in first grade how in your writing center you had strips, flaps, and Post-Its to add details *anywhere* in your writing? We have those too. They are in your writing caddies and in the writing center if you run out. You can stick them *anywhere* on the page. You can line it up exactly with the line where you want to add on or you can write the number 1 in the space where you want to add some writing and a number 1 on your Post-it, so that you know where the writing goes. Let me show you." I gave a quick demo to show them what it would look like in my writing.

"I hope you will take this challenge, and try to *magnify* your stories so that your reader will feel like they are right there—beside you. I am going to be on the lookout for the ways in which you do this. At the end of workshop, you'll have a chance to share how you used details to tell your small moments in *big* ways."





Once at my birthday party I made a strike. My birthday party was at Chelsea Piers.



I held the ball in my hands. I let the ball go. The ball rolled and rolled. I turned my back. The ball knocked all the pins down on the floor. "I got a strike."

FIG. 4-2 Heather writes with tiny actions after dramatizing the part out loud.

"I let the ball go," Heather said, reenacting in slow motion the way she released the ball.

"Say exactly what you did."

"My arm went down and my, my waist went down," she said, as she reenacted the position bowlers take as they release the ball. "Then I looked away 'cause I didn't want to see it," she said, referring to the fact that she didn't want to see the ball roll into the gutters.

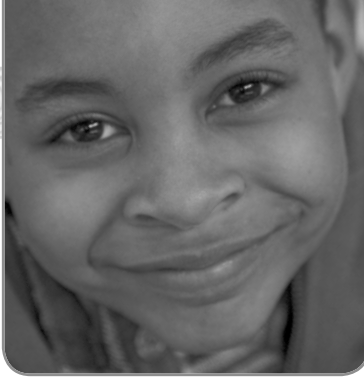
"And then?" I prompted.

"Then I saw it and I said, 'I got a strike! I got a strike!'" Heather said, reenacting how she jumped for glee.

"So, Heather, I recorded what you said. Will you reread your writing and ask yourself, 'Is there anything I should add on that shows the exact story of what happened when I went bowling?'" I opened her book to the page we'd discussed at some length.

I reread my transcript of what she'd said earlier. Soon Heather had added to her page.

I then wrapped up the conference and reminded Heather not only of the steps that we went through to pick the part and think about what she wanted to show, but reminded her that sometimes just using her body will help her to "magnify the details." In this way, I emphasized the strategy she could use on another day and with a different piece.



SHARE

Using Students as Mentors

Highlight two pieces from a student that demonstrate how a writer used details to zoom in on a small moment.

"One two three, all eyes on me." The students all stopped immediately this time. I reminded them, "Remember what you say back? One . . .," I prompted. They chimed in, "One two, all eyes on you!"

"Will you bring over your writing, a Post-it from your caddy, and a pen? Let's gather in the meeting area. Quickly and quietly, find your rug spot!" As children take their places, I gave every partnership a copy of writing done by their classmates.

"Writers, I'm giving you a copy of a piece of writing that Kenzy did. We'll study this closely, almost as if we are studying the writing through a magnifying lens."

I chose two pieces to study with the class, two by the same writer, and named what these writers did.

"Let me show you how Kenzy wrote the first draft of page one," I said. "I've copied it on chart paper." I then showed children an enlarged copy of Kenzy's first draft, page one. (See Figure 4–3.)

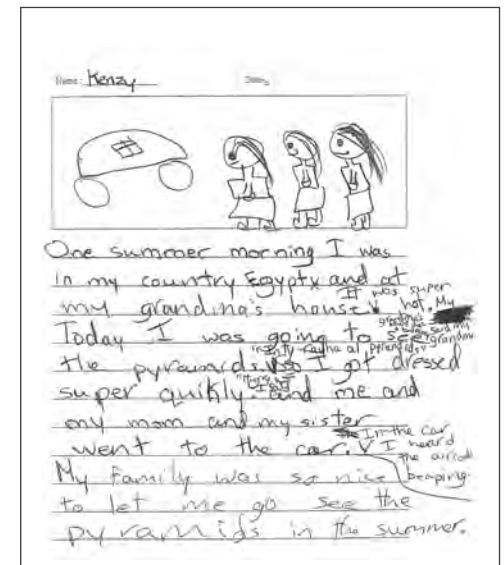
One summer morning I was in my country Egypt and at my grandma's house. Today I was going to see the pyramids so I got dressed super quickly and me and my mom and my sister went to the car.

"After she wrote that, she decided to magnify the details, to show a lot more," I said. "Will you follow along on your copy of Kenzy's second draft of page one, noticing and underlining ways she added details in a way that can help you imagine you are in Egypt with her?" The children studied Kenzy's new draft.

One summer morning I was in my country Egypt and at my grandma's house. It was super hot. My grandma's house has a balcony. Today I was going to see the pyramids. "Inty rayha al pyramids," said my grandma. So I got dressed super quickly "Hurry up," I said and me and my mom and my sister went to the car. In the car I heard the air conditioner beeping. My family was so nice to let me go see the pyramids in the summer.



FIG. 4–3 Page one of Kenzy's draft has sparse details.



Page one of Kenzy's revised draft includes dialogue in Arabic and other small details that allow the reader to envision the story.

"Turn and talk about the details you notice Kenzy adding," I said.

I listened as April asked her partner about the words Kenzy's grandmother used. "It's Arabic," Kenzy explained.

"You are right. You included dialogue, what people said," I said, naming the craft move. "She used her first language, Arabic. That really helps us imagine life in her grandma's house in Egypt, doesn't it? What a wise decision to write in both languages!"

I convened the class, noting to them all, "April realizes that Kenzy didn't just tell us what people said, she used their language to show exactly what and how they said it!" I then let the class name a few more things, then turned to wrap up the session.

"Here's an example of another piece, 'Death of Florida,' by Ian, with revisions. (See Figure 4–4.) Ian did something similar to Kenzy. He added details to his story to magnify the moment. Quickly turn and tell your partner a detail you notice in Ian's writing that works especially well—one you might try out in your own writing."

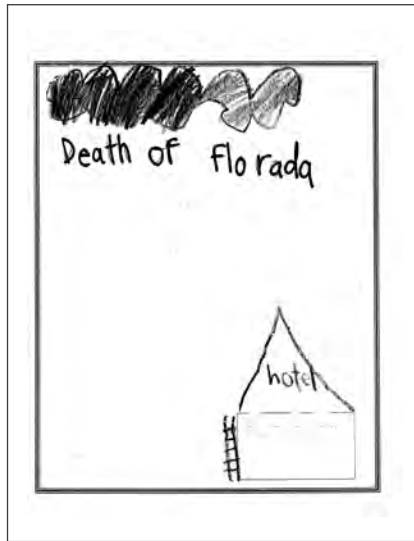
Children noticed a variety of things, in particular, that sound words like *whoosh*, *blow*, and *smashed* gave a feeling of excitement, and that the bits of dialogue and thinking Ian included made them feel like they were watching this storm with Ian.

Debrief. Name the big work of the day and rally students to set goals for what they want to try next in their writing, making a plan for tomorrow's workshop.

"Wow, writers! You noticed so many things! Will you, right now, on your Post-it, jot down what you want to try that you could try tomorrow? I have extra Post-it notes if you want to try two or three things." As children wrote, I added, "Put the Post-its at the spot in your writing where you'll do this work."

"Writers, now we have a plan for tomorrow! Wonderful! Will you make sure you put this writing on your 'In Progress' side of your folder? Then put your folder away. And table monitors, will you put your writing caddies back in the writing center? Ready, set, everyone—off you go to do your jobs!"

I purposely chose to spotlight students with very different types of stories to show the other writers the possibilities. This reinforces the idea that they can choose any topic to write about. Notice how I highlight the writing, the craft of the work these students are doing right away so that students don't get stuck on the topics.



Page 1: Woooosh! Blow! My mom blew up my floaties. I slid them up my arm. I put them on by myself. I will float I thought. I walked to the pool. I was floating too.

Page 2: I was staying still floating. The little waves passed by us. I saw my dad. I said "Hi Dad!" My dad waved. I smiled.



Page 3: After 30 minutes, a storm came. We picked up our stuff! We ran to the hotel. "Quick," I said. Lightning! The lightning smashed to the ground.

Page 4: I ran to the hotel with dad. Also, that was scary. "Get the food for that storm!" I yelled. We were safe in the hotel. We ran upstairs. After that I got a towel and dried up.

Page 5: I got into the bed a minute or so later I recognized that my mom and dad were looking at the storm out the window. I joined them. Wow! I yelled. All of this happened in Florida.

FIG. 4-4 Details such as dialogue, thought, precise actions, and sound words bring out the setting and the mood of Ian's story.